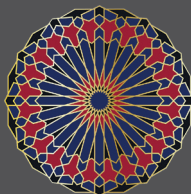


ما هي السلفية SALAFISM

AND WHO ARE THE SALAFIS IN THIS ERA?

Within Islam there is a **body of Muslims** known as the **Salafis** who seem to be winning **more converts** than any other sect in the **UK and North America**. It is a practice of Islam rooted in the **Qur'an and Prophetic Tradition** with an emphasis on studying and **understanding the religious texts** through the **eyes of the Companions of the Prophet**. The last 20 years has seen huge **media and academic interest** that focuses on the **Salafis**...



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—SALAFISM IS NOT A NEW SECT

Salaf is an Arabic term that refers to a people who preceded us from the earlier generations. In Islamic terminology it refers to the righteous predecessors from the first three generations of Islam. The Prophet (ﷺ) referred to them in his saying: **“The best of mankind is my generation, then those who come after them, then those who come after them.”**¹ The Qur’ān also mentions them with praise and those who follow them: **“The first and foremost in faith from the Migrants from Makkah and the Helpers in Madinah, then those who follow them exactly, Allāh is pleased with them, and they are pleased with Him. He has prepared for them Gardens of Paradise under which rivers flow, they will remain therein forever. That is the supreme success.”**² Those being referred to are the Salaf, or the Righteous Predecessors. They had a united belief and methodology which they learned from the Messenger (ﷺ) and then they passed it to the following generations. In times of differing, controversy and upheaval, the Prophet (ﷺ) commanded those who lived after him to return to his way and the way of his most

1. Bukhārī (2651), Muslim (2535).

2. *Sūrah At-Tawbah* (100).

trusted Companions for resolution and guidance³. They did not differ in their understanding of the Oneness of Allah in His Lordship, His sole right of worship and His beautiful Names and lofty Attributes. They agreed upon the forbiddance of excommunication (*takfir*) of believers due to sins lesser than idolatry, and upon the forbiddance of rebellion against the ruler, whether righteous or tyrannical⁴. Differing did occur amongst them, but never in the fundamentals of the Religion and Belief. They may have differed in subsidiary matters related to purification and its manner, or individual actions in the prayer, or the types of food that are permitted or disliked, but they remained united on the core beliefs and methodology⁵. It is for this reason, one finds that the early scholars of *Ahl as-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah*⁶ produced writings in the field of belief

3. Ahmad (17142), Ibn Mājah (43), authenticated by Albānī.

4. *Minhāj as-Sunnah* of Ibn Taymiyyah (6/336), and throughout *Sharh as-Sunnah* of Barbahārī.

5. Ibn 'Uthaimīn in *Al-Fatāwa ash-Shar'iyyah fī al-Masā'il al-'Asriyyah min Fatāwa 'Ulamah al-Bilād al-Haram* (p.792)

6. Translated as: *The people of the Prophetic way and those who hold fast to the body of the Companions*. This term was used by the Companions of the Prophet such as Ibn 'Abbās (رضي الله عنه). The opposers of this guided group were referred to by Ibn 'Abbās as *Ahl al-Bid'ah wa al-Furqah* (*The people of innovation and separation*). See Lālikā'ī (74), *Tafsir* of Ibn Kathīr (2/76).

that were identical in the core elements of creed and methodology. These scholars may have been separated by seas, and huge land masses due to the vastness of the Muslim lands and may have lived in different generations, but their writings in which they expound upon the creed of the Companions of the Prophet (ﷺ) is almost identical in content, though their styles of writing may have differed⁷. It is truly a blessing from Allāh that many of these works from the first four centuries of Islam have been verified from manuscripts, translated and are available for you to read. Through that way you can test the veracity of the Salafist claims. Read for example, *The Creed of Al-Bukhārī* (died 256 AH), *The Foundations of the Sunnah* of Ahmad Ibn Hanbal (died 241 AH), *The Explanation of the Creed* of Al-Barbahārī (died 329 AH) and one could easily continue listing several dozen works from that era that are now available to the English reader. So today, a **Salafi** in religious terms is a person who follows the Salaf in creed, methodology, worship, and every aspect of religious life. He must be true to the ascription and not merely claim it whilst acting contrary to the principles of Salafism.

7. Abu Mudhaffar in *Al-Hujjah fi Bayān al-Muhajjah* (2/224)

—SALAFISM IS NOT AN EXTREMIST SECT

There is a misunderstanding amongst many Muslims and non-Muslims alike who have been led to believe that Salafism is an extreme or radical sect within Islam. This notion is propagated by ill-informed journalists, unscrupulous ‘academics’ and others seeking to malign the Salafis based on sectarian agendas. Unfortunately, policy makers within government are sometimes influenced by these fallacies and myths surrounding Salafism. So it is a duty upon us to explain with textual proofs and Islamic tradition the falsehood of these accusations.

From the outset, we say Salafism is an orthodox understanding of Islam⁸ yet it is moderate, giving leeway where necessary,⁹ and firmly based in the teachings of the Qur’an and Prophetic texts (*hadīth*) upon the interpretation and understanding of the Companions of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), then further explained and expounded

8. This is exemplified by the saying of the great scholar, Mālik Ibn Anas (died 179), “**The latter part of this *ummah* will not be rectified except by that which rectified its earliest part.**” *Ash-Shifā* of Qādi Iyād (2/88), *Al-Iqtidā* of Ibn Taymiyyah (2/762).

9. The Prophet (ﷺ) said, “**Let the Jews understand that there is leeway in our Religion. Surely, I was sent with the pure and forgiving Religion.**” *As-Sahīhah* of Albānī (881).

by the great scholars of Islam of the first four centuries, referred to as the Salaf. It is this understanding and its application that protects Salafism from extremism and terrorist violence. There are numerous Quranic verses, Prophetic sayings and writings of the great early Salafist scholars that vehemently oppose killing of non-combatants: men, women and children including ambassadors and emissaries¹⁰. These texts forbid attacking non-Muslim countries who have pacts and covenants with Muslim nations. War is not declared except by a ruler of a nation who sends his army into battle with a *just war* that is openly declared between two nations. Civilians are not to be harmed in such conflicts. This rules out the idea of insurgencies, terrorist activities and suicide bombings in any country, whether Muslim or non-Muslim¹¹. The rules of engagement in war are well-known and recorded in the books of jurisprudence and in the edicts of the Salafist scholars, past and present. We have expounded upon this in numerous published writings and articles.

—IF SALAFISM AND ISLAM ARE BOTH ONE AND THE SAME, WHY USE THE TERM AT ALL?

This is a question that Salafis are often asked and

10. A narration collected by Abu Dāwūd (2761).

11. See: IslamAgainstExtremism.com and AbuKhadeejah.com

the simple answer is that Islam itself called to distinguishing the people of truth from the people who are misguided. The Muslims were always destined to fall into schism just as occurred with the Jews and Christians¹². The Prophet foretold that the Muslims would divide into ‘seventy-three sects’, one sect was described by the Prophet as being ‘saved from Hell’. When asked by his Companions to describe the one distinguished and ‘saved sect’, he replied, **“Those who follow that which I and my Companions are upon.”**¹³ In a narration he said, **“They are the *Jamā’ah*”**¹⁴ The term *jamā’ah* refers to a body of Muslims who adhere to the truth even if they are small in number.¹⁵ It was a well-known characteristic of the early Muslim scholars to use terms to distinguish the various Islamic sects in line with their particular beliefs so, for example, the early terrorists, insurgents and extremists were known, and are still known as the *Khawārij*

12. The Prophet informed his Companions that the Jews divided into seventy-one sects and the Christians in seventy-two, and the Muslims will divide into seventy-three. Reported by Ibn Mājah (3992).

13. Tirmidhī (2641)

14. Ibn Mājah (3992). This is proof that the *Jamā’ah* is not the majority, but those who follow the Prophet and his Companions.

15. The Companion, Ibn Mas’ūd said, **“The *Jamā’ah* is what agrees with the truth, even if you are just one person.”** *Al-*

(the Rebellious Ones). The sect that rejected the first three *Rightly Guided Caliphs*, and virtually all the other Companions save a handful, and then ascribed divinity to ‘Ali (رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ) and his offspring, were known as the *Shi’ah* (the Faction of ‘Ali), or the *Rāfidah* (the Rejecters). When these and other sects appeared, the Companions of the Prophet and the scholars after them, made the correct path and creed distinct in the following way: 1) By refuting the innovated ideologies that deviated from the established and agreed-upon creed and methodology (*manhaj*) of the Prophet. 2) Clarifying the truth with quotes from the revealed texts and with reasoned arguments. 3) Allying with the people of truth, their scholars and the **Saved Sect**. And the early scholars used several titles to identify the adherents of the *Saved Sect*, such as: *Ahl as-Sunnah wa al-Jamā’ah*, *Ahl al-Hadīth* (The People of Narration), and the *Salafis*. The usage of the term *Salaf* dates back to the Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), when he described himself as being a “**blessed Salaf**” of his daughter, Fātimah.¹⁶ In the third century it was known that scholars would refer to the upholders of the correct creed and methodology as *Salafis*.¹⁷ In

Bā’ith ‘ala Inkār al-Bid’ah wa al-Hawādith of Abu Shāmah (22).

16. Bukhārī (6285), Muslim (2450).

17. As an example: Muhammad Ibn Khalaf Al-Wakī’ (died

fact Ibn Taymiyyah and other scholars¹⁸ reported a consensus of the Muslims in approving the usage of the ascription Salafi.¹⁹

—SALAFISM IS ONE CREED & METHODOLOGY, NOT DIVISIBLE: IDENTIFYING THE FALSE CLAIMANTS

Part of the problem that Salafis are faced with in these times is that there are extremist and politicised groups that have misappropriated the Salafi label and claimed it for themselves. This has caused difficulties in identifying the true adherents from the false claimants. The proliferation of Salafist literature and lectures has meant that Muslims have become more enlightened regarding true Salafism and this has led to a large influx of Muslims and new converts into the Salafist creed in recent years. This proliferation did not go unnoticed by the radical groups who saw an opportunity to entice unsuspecting Muslims to their cause by misappropriating the label. They did not of course adopt those core elements of Salafist doctrine that forbids excommunication (*takfir*) of sinful Muslims, as well as terrorism, killing of innocents and rebellion against righteous or oppressive

306AH) described the scholar, Ismā'il Ibn Hammād as “**a true Salafi.**” *Akhhbār al-Qudāt* (2/167).

18. Such as: Albānī, Ibn Uthaimīn and Ibn Bāz.

19. *Majmū' al-Fatāwa* (4/149).

rulers. Salafis in fact are not the target audience of extremists because Salafis are the most theologically aware of all Muslims and are acquainted with the deviations of the *Khawārij*. So instead, they focus on indoctrinating common criminals, simple-minded youth and new converts. There is a myth propagated by ignorant observers which states that Muslims are initially attracted to a 'quietest' form of Salafism, then move on to radical and violent expressions of Islam. A false notion which has been disproved. The latest research²⁰ of nearly four thousand English-speaking Salafis from more than twenty countries has shown that Salafism has turned countless men and women away from extremism. Other researchers have stated that they found Salafis to be the most vehement in opposition to terrorism.²¹ Far from being a stepping stone to extremism, Salafism is a conveyor belt that carries people away from terrorist ideologies to the balanced and moderate path of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ).

End

20. Conducted by an independent online survey provider, from July 2016 to February 2017, as part of a PhD thesis.

21. Dr Anabel Inge, BBC Radio 4, Sunday, 20 Nov 2016.